

**Statement on the Democratic Substitute,
“The Complete Homeland Security Act”**

Representative Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Homeland Security
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Department of Homeland Security Authorization Bill Mark-Up

I appreciate the work the Chairman did to get as many Democratic suggestions into his bill as possible, and I want to say that most of the provisions in his bill are good ones.

However, the truth is that his bill does not address a large number of dangerous security gaps.

For example, nowhere does the Committee’s bill address or even directly mention: chemical plants, nuclear plants, aviation, the energy grid, railroads, passenger trains, buses, the need for first responders to be able to communicate better, the need for a comprehensive border strategy, the threat to our food supply, the importance of protecting privacy, or a host of other areas where we must improve security.

Our Democratic Substitute, the “Complete Homeland Security Act,” addresses all of these areas and more.

First, the Democratic plan makes funding for homeland security a priority. The President’s budget, and the Committee’s bill, does not fulfill the commitments we made in the 9/11 Act the President signed into law in December. The Democratic plan meets these challenges.

For example, for just a mere \$92 million called for in the 9/11 Act, we could install radiation portal monitors at every port of entry. Yet the Committee’s bill and the President’s budget fails to meet this mandate. The Democratic plan will correct that.

The Democratic plan also prioritizes funding in a number of key areas, including providing \$380 million to hire, equip and train 2,000 new border patrol agents. It also provides \$500 million to ensure that firefighters, police, and paramedics can communicate with each other in an emergency.

The Democratic plan also offers solutions where the Committee’s bill just doesn’t give any answers. For example, we protect our borders by requiring DHS to put the technology in place to ensure that every mile of the border is monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We protect our ports by creating stronger shipping container standards and developing new inspection systems.

We protect airlines and prevent hijackings by installing new “in-line” baggage screening systems that work better and faster.

And in an area where I strongly disagree with the Chairman, we fully sponsor the development of research on how to counter shoulder-fired missiles that terrorists could use to shoot down a plane.

We also strengthen security requirements for chemical plants, which the GAO recently found have almost no security standards.

The Democratic plan also better protects rail and public transit systems, seeks ways to protect agriculture and the nation’s food supply, and determines the threat to nuclear facilities.

The Democratic plan also recognizes that DHS is a new agency and isn’t perfect. We provide new authority to protect privacy, sponsor diversity, and create a stronger Inspector General.

The threats I have mentioned have been found in dozens of reports by the government itself. Yet the Committee’s bill nowhere even mentions these threats.

There can be no more wasted time. We must do what it takes now to make America secure. The Democratic plan is a complete plan for homeland security from A to Z.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.